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This article is one of a series on topics in primary care in which common diagnostic or therapeutic problems encountered in primary care practice are presented. Physicians interested in contributing to the series are encouraged to contact the series' editors.

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COVERT SYMPTOMS

When the cement stair divides, I cannot
find the riser, cannot place my foot
within the space between step and air.
I wait for someone to take my hand,
for the shapes to hold
so I can go up or down.

In the doctor's office, the examining table
separates into two, one catercornered
and slightly above the other.
They do a slow join until one overlaps.
On the narrow, white pallet, my head
helmeted like an astronaut's,
while the technician reads my brain, I lie still.
The sound is a rain of bullets.

So: the disease is physical,
misfiring synapses:
I can make do with this,
I had thought I was crazy. Back home
I mix dough to a sponge and let it rise,
add salt and oil and flour, pound
the risen bread down and beat on it
with the heels of my hands.
Between the risings, two suns
come together through the trees.

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